

After the Rain by **TheMikeWheelers** (jasongracefully)

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Summary:

Twice in her life, El was caught in the rain in the Hawkins woods.

After the Rain

Eleven hated the rain.

When she first escaped the lab, the rain was the cruel welcome to the real world. The real world where she was free, but not at all free of pain.

She shivered at her memories of her first night outside of Hawkins National Lab. Lost in an unfamiliar world, on the run from all she'd ever known.

Then the rain had started. El didn't even know what it was at first, all she knew was that this cold water was falling and she hated it.

It wasn't long before she was shaking from the cold, wearing nothing but an oversized shirt in November. The rain was pouring all around her and she couldn't do anything.

The trees helped block it to some extent, but in the end she was just a cold, lost girl soaking wet from the storm outside.

But then the boys found her. Mike found her. He had pulled her from the rain, and brought her to his home. He gave her new clothes to warm her and provided some shelter from the thunder outside.

That following week would be filled with fear and pain, but in that moment, all that mattered was in her first day of freedom she'd already seen the cruelty of the world. Kind men like Benny were killed, cold water fell from the sky like bullets. It all seemed so terrible, was the outside world any better than the lab?

And in that moment, these new boys had proved her wrong. If only temporary, they gave her solace from all the pain. Mike had given her a place to stay, and for the first time in her life, compassion.

Within a week, all that was gone.

She was gone, lost and trapped away from everyone. El was away from the world once again, having only a mere taste before she was pulled away again. It was more cruel than anything the lab had done

to her, because she didn't understand what the bad men were doing. Then her life allowed her to have a peek at what she could have. She saw kindness, friendship, love, and then she was pulled back into a world of nothingness.

For just a week, El was given an umbrella to shield the rain. Sure, some splashes may have hit her, but for that single week she was free of all the suffering she had known so much about.

The next year was like drowning. The water that once fell from the sky was now pulling out all her breath. All the pain was now amplified, increasing with every memory of Hawkins, Indiana.

Then the storm passed.

Well, one storm at least.

The day she returned to Hawkins was much like her first time out there. She was scared and confused, but this time she had hope. She had people she knew would be there, she had promises.

So when El heard the thunder and flashes lighting up the sky, she wasn't as struck with fear as before. She had survived far worse storms, a little rain never killed anyone.

Mud covered her bare feet, piling it's way up her legs. Yet she trudged on, not letting a small storm stop her. She had come this far, and she was so close. Close to Hawkins, close to safety, close to home.

Rain splattered down around her, soaking the destroyed pink dress she once wore with pride. Her entire body was drenched, every drop of water soaking her a little more.

But the rain was nothing, she'd spent the past year wishing for nothing more than a little rain, because as painful as it was, rain was freedom. Rain was the cleanse before a fresh start. And sometimes starting over can hurt, but it can bring so much love into one's life.

El was in the same position as she was a year ago: scared, wet, alone. Yet this was different. Before she had no idea what to expect. Now she knew what she wanted, she knew where she was going. This time

wasn't a fresh start, she was taking back the unfinished beginning from a year earlier. The story that had started but was stolen away from her before she could really enjoy it.

Her first rainstorm had been the beginning of a fresh start, and this one was the reclaiming of that start. El had survived in a lab for 12 years, and then another year in a similar Hell. She wasn't going to let anything stop her from going home.

The rain might have been cold and painful, but if that's what she needed to get through to go back to all she had ever loved, she would walk through the strongest hurricane to do it.

Before she knew it, there was a clearing from the trees. A dimly lit street chased through the area.

She recognized it, despite ever really getting to know it like the boys did.

Mirkwood.

The road to Will's house, the place where the Demogorgon found him. The place where the boys had spent time after time riding bikes on. The place they brought her to after whisking her out of the woods a year ago.

And then a light started to shine in the distance. El figured she should move, she had no idea who could be coming.

Yet all she could do was stand still, staring at the light. She felt like a moth, being drawn to it. She didn't know why, but as the distant light came closer she felt her heart start to speed up. Somehow she just knew, this was exactly where she was supposed to be. This was exactly who she was supposed to see. That light was what her fate was bringing her.

And then the light got closer, recognizable now. It was attached to the front of a bicycle, a boy around her age riding it quickly, without a care in the world, completely unaware that he was about to find everything he had spent the past year desperately wishing for.

Mike Wheeler didn't expect anything to come from his ride home

from Will's house. He must have made it hundreds of times in his life, it was always the same. Nothing new ever happened on boring, old Mirkwood.

That was, until something extraordinary did happened on that boring, old road.

When Mike saw a figure up ahead, his heart pounded out of his chest. The stories Will told, the Demogorgon finding him here, right in front of his bike path.

Mike started to shake, and before he knew it his bike had crashed into the side of the road. He lied on a pile of leaves, terrified he was in the same spot as Will was a year ago.

And through this, El simply watched. Rain was pouring all around her. She no longer cared about how drenched she was, she didn't even realize she was shaking. She just watched as the stranger crashed before her very eyes, and those same eyes widening when she realized the boy was no stranger.

Mike, still stricken with paranoia, turned onto his back, and when he saw who stood in front of him, the paranoia may have faded, but it did nothing for his heart beating out of his chest.

Awestruck, he slowly pushed himself up and willed himself to walk towards her. His mind was screaming, begging for this not to be a dream.

Then he was in front of her, and all he could do was stare. The girl in front of him, with short hair and a tattered, once-pink dress, was looking at him like the entire world was crashing down.

Maybe it was crashing down. Because to Mike, he knew that his world was at least. She was here. A year of begging, of searching, of crying, and she was here.

He finally willed up the courage to talk, breath shaky like it might crack at any moment, he whispered out something barely audible over the sounds of pouring rain and thunder surrounding them.

“El.”

She smiled and he snapped out of his dreamlike state. He raced over and pulled her into the tightest hug he could give. She tensed at first in surprise, but then she started to hug back, the realization that he was really right in front of her finally hitting.

They hugged for God-knows how long. They probably could have stayed that way all night, they had spent a year apart and now couldn't bear the thought of being away from the other any longer.

Then tears started to fall from Mike's eyes. All the pain he held in him since he saw her disappear came tumbling out. All the emotions he ignored, when Dustin and Lucas called him crazy, when his parents didn't understand why he was upset, when he had nightmares of her every night for a month, all those emotions were now piling down onto the ground.

No matter how much rain or how many tears hit the ground of that desolate road, all that mattered was she was back. She was right here, in Mike's arms, and everything was going to be okay.

For a few minutes, they completely forgot it was raining.

Author's Note:

Hope you enjoyed!